

Message Text

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ACTION IO-13

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8223
INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
USMISSION UNUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 13960

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, UNGA, NI, ID
SUBJECT: TIMOR AND THE 31ST UNGA: NIGERIAN POSITION EXPLAINED

REF: USUN 5939

1. DURING DINNER DECEMBER 9 FOR VISITING U.S; SENATOR DICK CLARK, DIRECTOR MEA'S INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION DEPARTMENT AMBASSADOR H.B. MUSA EXPLAINED STORY BEHIND NIGERIAN POSITION ON TIMOR. IN ESSENCE HE SAID THE NIGERIAN DECISION TO SUPPORT THE INDONESIAN POSITION WAS A MISTAKE WHICH HAS NOW BEEN RECTIFIED.

2. ACCORDING TO MUSA, NIGERIA HAS CONSISTENTLY BACKED THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION; HE CITED FMG'S POSITION ON WESTERN SAHARA AS AN EXAMPLE. AS LATE AS COLOMBO NON-ALIGNED MEETING, SAID MUSA, NIGERIA HAD MAINTAINED THIS POSITION VIS-A-VIS THE INDONESIAN AND TIMOR. HOWEVER, AN "INEXPERIENCED" MEMORANDUM FOR THE EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMISSIONER RECOMMENDING THAT THE FMG SUPPORT THE INDONESIAN POSITION. WITHOUT CHECKING THE MATTER OUT WITH OTHER DEPARTMENTS IN MEA, THE COMMISSIONER APPROVED THE RECOMMENDATION. HIS DECISION WAS COMMUNICATED TO NIGERIAN UN MISSION AND DJAKARTA.

3. MUSA, WHO AT TIME WAS IN NEWYORK WITH NIGERIAN DELEGATION, IMMEDIATELY QUESTIONED THE CHANGE IN POLICY IN A CABLE TO LAGOS. MEA SUBSEQUENTLY COUNTERMANDED ITS
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EARLIER INSTRUCTION BUT NOT SOON ENOUGH TO PREVENT THE

NIGERIAN CHARGE IN DJAKARTA FROM INFORMING INDONESIANS
OF NIGERIAN DECISION TO SUPPORT GOI'S POSITION.
RESULTING SITUATION HAS PROVEN VERY EMBARRASSING TO
FMG. DECISION HAS BEEN MADE TO TRANSFER NIGERIAN CHARGE
TO TOKYO BECAUSE HIS POSITION HAS BECOME UNTENABLE.

4. COMMENT: AS COMMENTARY ON INNER-WORKINGS OF MEA
BUREAUCRACY, MUSA'S STORY IS REVEALING. EVEN MORE
SURPRISING, MUSA WAS UNAWARE THAT NIGERIA HAD BEEN
ABSENT DURING PLENARY VOTE ON TIMOR. RATHER HE BELIEVED
THAT NIGERIA HAD VOTED AGAINST THE INDONESIANS. AS MUSA
AT ONE POINT EMPHASIZED, HOWEVER, NIGERIAN UN MISSION
HAS A GREAT DEAL OF FLEXIBILITY WITHIN BROAD POLICY
OUTLINES. IN THIS CASE, NIGERIA'S UN MISSION APPARENTLY
USED THIS FLEXIBILITY AND OPTED TO BE ABSENT TO AVOID
FURTHER EMBARRASSMENT AND STRAINED RELATIONS WITH
DJAKARTA.
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